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News Release ~ Communiqué

Banff's Middle Springs II housing development approved

CALGARY, June 9, 1995 - Approval has been given for the Middle Springs II housing development in the Town of Banff to proceed with specified measures for dealing with the project's environmental impacts, Canadian Heritage Minister Michel Dupuy announced today. No further development proposals in the Middle Springs area will be entertained.

"Middle Springs II represents a reasonable and difficult balance between meeting the social needs of the community and responding to environmental concerns," said Minister Dupuy. "However, further residential development beyond this phase will not be considered in the Middle Springs area."

Minister Dupuy also stated that he is requesting the Town of Banff to review its General Municipal Plan. Such a review will ensure that social needs for quality community living are met, given Banff's special requirements within the Bow Valley and as a National Park and World Heritage Site.

In making his decision on Middle Springs II, the Minister said that all requirements under the Environmental Assessment Review Process Guidelines Order (EARPGO) have been fully met, and the resulting scientific and social information has been carefully and diligently considered.

Among the many measures designed to deal with the project's environmental impacts are: adjustments of the development boundary to accommodate the wildlife corridor; trail re-routing and new trails developed to direct foot, mountain bike and horse traffic away from the wildlife corridor; and an educational campaign for the public to explain the need for these changes.

"The Banff Bow Valley Study and a review of the General Municipal Plan are excellent opportunities for the Town and Parks Canada to constructively address some of the challenges facing Banff National Park," Minister Dupuy added. "These reviews are opportunities to demonstrate to all Canadians our mutual interest in ensuring that this important national park be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations."

The Minister also indicated that he was requesting a more independent and transparent application and audit of the "need to reside" within the Town Of Banff. He has asked Parks Canada to work with the Town and business interests to develop revised measures. Under National Parks Act regulations, residency in Banff National Park is restricted to persons deemed to have a "need to reside" there.

Other major projects in Banff National Park, the CP Mountain Park proposal and Trans-Canada Highway twinning proposal, are still under the environmental assessment and review process and no decisions have been made yet. Parks Canada expects to take the Trans-Canada Highway twinning proposal to the public for comments and review later this month.

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BACKGROUND

MIDDLE SPRINGS HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

As part of the Town of Banff's Incorporation Agreement with the Government of Canada, certain lands were identified in the town's General Municipal Plan for residential development. The Middle Springs II area was one of these "residential reserves."

In accordance with the National Parks Lease and License of Occupation Regulations, residency in Banff is restricted to persons deemed to have a "need to reside". Nonetheless, studies have identified a shortfall of 788 residential units for 1986-1995, and an estimated shortfall of 1144 units by the year 2005.

Middle Springs I, the first phase of the residential development project was completed in 1990 with 82 units. Middle Springs II will encompass approximately 29 acres of developable land (including roadways, housing and trails), and includes 325-350 new residential units. This approach will allow for a mix of dwelling types throughout most of the project. In order that the wildlife corridor on Sulphur Mountain be maintained, proposed phases III and IV, which were for residential housing, are excluded from further consideration.

Because Middle Springs II was initiated prior to April 1994, it was specifically excluded from development restrictions imposed during the Banff Bow Valley Study. One of the predominant concerns raised about the project was maintenance of the adjacent wildlife corridor. The project was assessed under EARPGO, and it was determined that the project impacts could be mitigated to insignificance with new technology.